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## THE ISSUE OF 1888.

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THE issue of the pending National contest is one of approval or disapproval of the existing Federal Administration. Each voter can cast but one electoral ballot, and by that single, supreme expression of his judgment as a sovereign citizen declare his conscientious conviction whether Democratic control of Federal affairs should be continued or Republican direction re-established.

There are many important questions involved in the election, but they must all be determined by the vote according to the balance of opinion of each individual as to whether the Democrats should be ousted and the Republicans re-instated. This general issue is emphasized by the fact that the chief Democratic nominee is the present incumbent of the Presidential office.

It follows that the entire record of the Democratic Administration should be taken into account in considering the issue of 1888, and that comparison should be made with Republican administration during preceding Presidential terms to judge whether on the whole the country would benefit by preventing the continuance and completion of Democratic plans. In estimating the value of what the Democrats have done, the fact that the Republicans still control the Senate and practically hold a veto power, must not be overlooked. If the Senate, as well as the House and the Executive, had been Democratic, the present Administration could be held to stricter accountability than can now be fairly done. In the absence of full control of the legislative branch of the government allowance must be made for partial failure to carry out Democratic pledges, and the Democratic Administration and party must have the benefit not only of what they have succeeded in doing, but also of what they have promised and commenced, but on account of Senatorial opposition failed to fully perform. Should the Democrats prevail in the approaching election, majority control in the Senate will soon follow, and in any case the verdict of the people would prob-

ably avail to place the Senate in practical accord with the President. Shall the experiment of Democratic national government be interrupted before the trial can be full and fair? Are the results of the past three years such that the test should be no further pursued, or should a verdict of approbation of what has been done be rendered in the belief that the future conduct of affairs will be at least equally satisfactory? The votes of some will be controlled by one sort of considerations, and those of others by different ones, but the judgment that must be given is simply yes or no to the question, "Shall the Republicans be put back again, or shall the Democrats have a chance to show whether they can competently administer our national affairs?"

At present one great question mainly occupies the public attention, that of taxation. This far-reaching subject brings the economic question of the effect of taxation and trade regulation upon industry more prominently before the people than has ever before been done in this country. But the tax question is one of those respecting which Democratic Administration has had no opportunity to furnish demonstration of the soundness or unsoundness of its theories. Nothing can be done by way of practical test without the concurrence of the Senate, and such concurrence, if obtained, will be likely to be upon terms that would necessarily modify and to some extent confuse the issue. Nevertheless the public mind is fastened upon the tax issue, and will not be diverted from it, and it is altogether probable that more votes will be influenced by approbation or disapproval of the Democratic plan, as embodied in the Mills bill, than by any other single consideration, or perhaps by all others taken together.

Had the Chicago Convention contented itself with adherence to the system its party created, the Republican position would have been one of defense of the existing protective system pure and simple, and the comparison could have been made by the people directly between what the Republicans have done in the past and what Democrats are now promising to do. But the Chicago platform does not merely stand by the record of the Republican party. It goes beyond all previous economic declarations in our politics, and indeed runs counter to nearly all of them.

It suggests a tariff to check imports, and declares that all internal taxation, including the whiskey tax and the new tax on oleomargarine, enacted to protect the dairy farmers against

fraudulent imitation of their products and brands, should be repealed before any tariff reduction is effected. This novelty introduced by the Republican Convention makes the tax issue not one between what the Republicans have enacted and what the Democrats propose, but between two contrasting propositions, the Democratic idea of reducing receipts by adding to the free list and modifying the schedules of articles continuing to be taxed, and a novel scheme that may fairly be characterized as a system of prohibitory taxation.

The Republicans cannot under these circumstances claim that they are defending a cherished American institution. They are proposing something more radical than their opponents advocate. They ask the country to take a new departure and to adopt the theory of taxing for the sake of controlling and restricting manufacture and commerce in a way that has never heretofore been seriously proposed.

The tax issue between the Republican and Democratic parties is therefore in no sense one between protection and free trade. It is simply one between tariff revision by reducing the number of taxed objects and lowering the rates of taxation, and the erection of a new system of tariff for protection only, in which the amount of money to be collected shall be left altogether out of question, and no heed be taken whether revenues be increased or diminished, or prices go up or down. When the money is collected some way will be found of spending it, or of distributing it, if there be more than can be spent. But we must, according to this theory, continue for time without limit, to collect not merely war tariff taxes, but duties high enough to shut out foreign competition, and to hold our own markets as a self-producing and self-sustaining country.

Mr. Blaine developed one weak point of this position in his Portland speech about the trusts. With a tariff framed primarily to prevent importations, prices would be held at the highest point to which combinations could raise them without fear of check by the competition of articles of foreign make. The only limit to charges would be the ability of the combinations to hold together, or the patience of the people in refraining from violence as the last mode of redress. The theory that trusts cannot control the business in any article used by 60,000,000 people is refuted by the sure demonstration of experience. Trusts do control business in

such articles, and they are getting control of new branches of manufacture almost every day. The case of the trusts makes the issue very plain between reasonable tariff, with a safety valve in the ability to check extortion by importation, and exorbitant customs taxes without any such check. This is only one feature of the many sided question of taxation which the American people are called upon to decide.

But it is entirely safe to say that the effect of Mr. Blaine's Portland speech, contrasted with the anti-trust declarations of President Cleveland's messages, will be so great, that the issue between a policy that would check the trusts, and one that would render any check upon them impossible, will continue to attract public attention until the end of the campaign, whatever the action of Congress may be. It is the issue of anti-monopoly against monopoly presented in the clearest form, and illustrated by the experience of every consumer of the necessities of life. Were tariff duties made still higher, the complaints against monopoly that now exist would necessarily be multiplied.

The fact that the Republican tariff doctrine of this year is a new departure in the direction of greater protection to monopolies cannot be successfully denied in view of the declarations of the Tariff Commission of 1882, and the speeches and state papers of Republican statesmen from the date of the enactment of the highest war tariff down to the present time. In 1870 Senator Morrill, the official sponsor of the high-tariff rates, said: "It is a mistake of the friends of a sound tariff to insist upon the extreme rates imposed during the war," and the public has recently become very familiar with declarations of the same nature made by Grant, Arthur, Garfield, Blaine, Sherman, McCulloch, Logan, Allison, Oliver P. Morton, Henry Wilson, Kasson, Hawley, Folger, and even the present Republican candidates for President and Vice-President. The fathers of the Republican tariff plank of 1888 are not to be omitted from the list of hostile critics of the system they now advocate. In 1882, Mr. William C. McKinley, of Ohio, said: "The free list might be enlarged without affecting injuriously a single American interest," and in 1886 Mr. William D. Kelley, of Pennsylvania, declared—

"Let the raw material come in. Let us make blankets that will drive out English blankets. Let us make our own 'English frieze' and 'Peterboro' frosted beaver.' Let us be able to rival England and France and other representative nations in making these cloths."

It is, therefore, plain that the Chicago tariff plank is revolutionary of the previous theory of the Republican party as expressed by its leading men, as well as in the tax planks of 1868 and 1884, the first of which declared : " It is due to the labor of the nation that taxation should be reduced and equalized, and reduced as rapidly as the national faith will permit," while the second said : " The Republican party pledges itself to correct the inequalities of the tariff and to reduce the surplus."

The new departure of Republicanism causes a singular condition in the attitudes of the two parties in the great national debate. While in the forum of action the initiative lies with the Democrats and has been assumed by them, in the forum of discussion the affirmative rests upon the Republicans through the necessity of explaining to the country a new proposition which differs far more widely from Republican practices and theories of the past than does anything that the Democrats have proposed or attempted. Mr. Hewitt's epigrammatic letter was the first sound unofficial explanation of the attitudes of the two parties, neither of them proposing to sustain the present protective system, but one advocating revision by reduction, while the other calls for the change from protection to prohibition.

Turning from the field of taxation and finance in which the discussion is necessarily theoretical, the mind of the thoughtful voter will be occupied with the issue of administrative reform. It was upon that question that Tilden obtained the votes of the majority of his countrymen in 1876 ; and Cleveland's administration has afforded the first opportunity for practical test of the truth of Democratic professions. Here is opportunity to compare, not what the parties are saying, but what they have done, and the people will find no obstacle to a fair comparison of Democratic performance with Republican performance under conditions substantially alike and laws not greatly varied.

Is or is not the tone of the Federal service on the whole better than it was previous to 1885 ? Is or is not the influence of the general government throughout the country now cast more uniformly and more strongly than heretofore in favor of simple economy and pure administration of public affairs ? Have the Democrats when in power tried to keep, and on the whole succeeded fairly well in keeping, their promises to make the government better than it was ?

Civil Service Reform was strongly advocated by Tilden in 1876, and, whatever criticisms have been fairly or unfairly made, it is certain that it has been first rendered practical and efficient under Cleveland. That we have on the whole an honest civil service, such as the Democratic platform of 1884 promised, cannot be denied, and no one will question the record that great advance has been made in the methods of competitive examinations, and that the power of appointment to positions covered by the civil service law is exercised through impartial operation of the reform machinery. The difficulties encountered by the President in putting the law into efficient operation have been almost incalculable. But not only has that duty been performed, but the system has been saved from its greatest danger in being taken out of the realm of mere theory and adapted to the conditions and requirements of a vast and complicated administrative system. That such was not the case under Republican federal control is undeniable. The Senate debates show that the Republican civil service was a fraud and a sham, and that there was annually lost to the Government at the port of New York alone more than \$20,000,000 by gross delinquencies and neglects of public officers. That the system was partial and administered by connivance is plain from the fact that the percentage of Democrats who obtained positions through the examinations was ridiculously small. That a great change in this respect has been effected is shown by the long continuance in place, during Cleveland's term, of a very large percentage of Republicans, and by the prompt promotion or appointment of men who passed the examinations in spite of their being Republicans. That the public administration at places of greatest importance has substantially improved is shown by the proceedings of the Hale Investigating Committee recently in session at New York, which, formed for the purpose of discrediting Democratic direction of the Custom House, resulted in eliciting a tribute to improved management. Taking the country all through, it is certain that the tone of the federal service has been raised, that the abuse of public office for partisan ends has decreased, and that statutes, which under former administrations were universally defied, are now scrupulously observed. It is plain to every candid inquirer that the Democratic pledge for administrative reform has not been broken, and that there is solid foundation for the assertion of the St. Louis platform that :

“The Democratic party welcome an exacting scrutiny of the administration of the Executive power, which four years ago was committed to its trust in the election of Grover Cleveland, President of the United States ; and it challenges the most searching inquiry concerning its fidelity and devotion to the pledges which then invited the suffrages of the people.”

The question of the public lands next comes in view, with the record of recovery and approaching restoration to the public domain of more than 130,000,000 acres wrongfully held by favored grantees of Republican rule. The importance to the people of a just execution of the Homestead Laws cannot be overestimated. That the Democrats are executing these laws justly is not denied. It is useless for Republicans to claim that they would have done as well had Blaine been elected. They had abundant opportunity for firm and fearless administration of this great trust, but they did not embrace it. Like most other features of Cleveland's administration, what has been done in respect to the public domain bears the stamp of his individual thought and effort, and the stand he took early in his term, ever since firmly maintained, cannot fail to tell strongly in his favor with the voters of the country.

Respecting pensions the facts and figures are too familiar to call for repetition. The President has been the instrument of doing more for Union veterans than any of his predecessors, or any two of them combined, eager and willing as they undoubtedly were to help the deserving soldier, and the administration of the Pension Office has been marked by reforms which have enabled the recipients of well deserved government aid to realize much larger net results than when the claim agents were in substantial command of that branch of the Interior Department.

In the management of foreign affairs, the Chinese treaty will attract the most attention. It is the unquestioned will of the people that the competition of Mongolian labor with American should be prevented, and that Asiatic barbarism should not be allowed to infringe upon American civilization. Chinese immigration has increased at a very rapid rate. Our laws have not heretofore been executed so as to check it. That the present Administration is laboring zealously to effectively administer these laws is certain. The treaty is not, it is true, in force. And here again comes into play the obstructive veto power of the Senate. Had the convention with China been ratified



as adopted by the contracting powers, a stop would have been put to the Chinese peril. The delay the Senate has caused may render the treaty fruitless, and if this is done the responsibility will rest fairly upon the Republican party, while the Democrats cannot be deprived of the credit of an effort to correct the evil which has elicited tributes of admiration from the statesmen and publicists of Europe. As to the contract labor laws in general, current events furnish abundant proof of the energy and intelligence with which the Democratic administration devotes itself to their enforcement.

In the work of naval construction it is not likely that any voter will hesitate long in choosing between the methods that obtained under Robeson and Chandler, and the intelligent and enterprising management of the present Secretary of the Navy. And so it is with a number of other questions of administrative detail, respecting none of which can it be fairly claimed that Democratic executive work has been inferior to that of Republican administrations.

Hence the Democracy, regarding the whole field of American public affairs, giving due precedence to industrial and fiscal questions and laying proper stress upon the advantage to our manufacturing industries of the admission of raw materials free of duty, has a right to claim from the American people a verdict of approbation of Democratic administration upon the ground of what has been done under existing laws, as well as on the score of what ought to be and, in the event of Democratic success, will be accomplished under statutes framed in accordance with Democratic principles. It is the boast of the Democracy of our day that it is first of all practical and business-like in executive work; that it deals with conditions, not with mere abstract theories, and is bound by its record, its principles and its hopes, to do the best that can be done for the people under the conditions that may from time to time confront it.

In the character and career of Cleveland and of Thurman it tenders to the people guarantees that continued confidence will not be misplaced.

A DEMOCRAT.